

ESRA SHAKESPEARE CONFERENCE Shakespeare and Myth

MONTPELLIER (France) – Wednesday 26-Saturday 29 June 2013

A shaper of European identity, Greco-Roman mythology has been invoked down the centuries both to glorify and undermine rulers, to uphold or subvert political or social order, to probe and question religious or gender issues. Simultaneously, Europe was the cradle of classical mythology, which has infused all modes of artistic creation and inspired influential theoretical and critical approaches well beyond the continent's borders, in the fields of history, literature, psychology or anthropology. In this process, the legacy of Antiquity encountered other European myths (Nordic, Celtic, etc.). Over the past fifty years or so, Europe has increasingly acted as an area of exchanges between its mythologies, ideas and representations and those of other continents. Today, the continent's heritage is challenged, refashioned or reconsidered in the light of other cultural forms that reflect an increasing diversity, out of which a new European melting-pot of myths may be emerging that interacts with other cultures in an increasingly globalized world.

Within that process, Shakespeare enjoys a privileged position. Like myth, and through classical and other myths, his work, "not of an age but for all time" and, indeed, places, has contributed to the building of a continental identity, providing tools to apprehend and comprehend, endorse and critique European history and culture. However, this European Shakespeare is to be taken not as confined to a Eurocentric vision but rather as pushing back boundaries, challenging assumptions and inviting a criss-crossing of perspectives worldwide. Reception and appropriation of his work have been processed through non-European mythological and cultural prisms, drawing attention to, and inviting research into, a plasticity that is akin to the flexibility of myth.

Following upon the exploration of Europe's cultural landscapes and seascapes through Shakespeare's works at previous conferences of the European Shakespeare Association, the Montpellier conference proposes a journey into Shakespeare's kaleidoscopic "Mythscape".

This journey can take three main directions:

- Myth in Shakespeare: classical mythology pervades the work of Shakespeare and his European contemporaries, like a kind of *lingua franca* or culturally bonding material; other mythological influences are also present in his work, or may be processed into it through stagings, adaptations or other forms of recreation.
- Shakespeare as Myth-Maker: Shakespeare has contributed to raise to the status of myth Mediterranean and (other) European locations (Venice, Bohemia, Cyprus, Elsinore, Navarre, Roussillon, Verona, Vienna...) and figures (Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Desdemona) that have found a place in the collective imagination, alongside classical and legendary places and characters.
- Shakespeare as Myth: the paradox of his own elusive biography and the universality of his works have contributed to a process whereby Shakespeare himself is at the centre of a myth – his own, and that of all those who claim him as their own, through translation and other forms of appropriation.

Within these three directions, which are neither watertight nor mutually exclusive, the conference and its attendant seminars invite papers on a wide range of topics that include:

Production: stage and screen

- (Re)presenting myth(s) on Shakespearean stages and screens
- Shakespeare's mythology as a common ground for, or an obstacle to, understanding and exchange
- The (ir)relevance of Shakespeare's mythological references on the contemporary and global stage and screen.
- Processing Shakespearean performances and performers into "myths"

Translation

- Shakespeare's place in the transfer and circulation of classical mythology between Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Renaissance Europe
- Shakespeare as "translator" of Ovid, Virgil and other classical authors for his time
- The impact of translation on Shakespeare's mythological subtext
- Shakespeare's "translating" of the politics of Olympus and Rome into a critique of the Elizabethan and Jacobean context
- "Mythical" translations and/or translators of Shakespeare

Criticism

- Shakespeare's place in the transfer and circulation of classical mythology between Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Renaissance Europe
- Mythography as a key to Shakespeare
- Iconography in relation to myth, Shakespeare and the visual arts
- The relevance of classicist scholarship to Shakespeare studies (Claude Calame, Marcel Détienne, Jean-Pierre Vernant)
- Addressing 20th century critical approaches on the relation of Shakespeare and myth (Georges Dumézil, Mircéa Eliade, Claude Lévi-Strauss)
- Shakespeare's mythical figures in interdisciplinary studies

Afterlives

- The "mythologizing" of Shakespeare's world (characters, places, etc.)
- Representing and receiving the Shakespeare icon in contemporary cultures
- (Re)fashioning, perpetuating and/or subverting the Shakespearean myth through film, TV and the Internet
- Shakespeare's myths as an enduring form of (re)creation
- Working on and with Shakespeare's myths in the classroom

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Details and deadlines for submitting proposals for seminars will be made available shortly.



Advisory Board

Dominique Goy-Blanquet, Chair of the Société Française Shakespeare, Emeritus Professor, University of Amiens
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Montpellier

An attractive, historic location

Montpellier is a beautiful, dynamic Mediterranean city, situated in the south of France, with a warm, sunny climate. Montpellier is one of the oldest university cities in Europe, which attracted figures such as Ramon Llull and Rabelais as well as, some say, Petrarch, who spent part of his life in neighbouring Avignon. François Gigot de La Peyronie was born, studied and taught at Montpellier before becoming surgeon to Louis XIV. Its Musée Fabre offers rich holdings in French and other European art and regularly hosts international exhibitions.

Although founded barely a millennium ago, Montpellier is at the heart of the Languedoc-Roussillon region that offers rich legacies of a Greek and Roman presence. In addition to the Lattes archaeological museum, on the city's outskirts, which is on the site of an ancient harbour, Agde's museum of underwater archaeology contains France's largest collection of antique bronzes; the Nîmes Arena is the best preserved amphitheatre of the Roman era, within a short walk of the city's other Roman sites, the Maison Carrée and Tour Magne.

Montpellier's "classical connection": coexisting with the city's historic, 17th-18th-century centre, whole new districts have emerged, designed by Catalan architect Ricard Bofill in a resolutely neo-classical style. Copies of classical sculptures share fountains and arcades with contemporary art. Districts, squares and streets carry such evocative names as "Antigone", "Corum", "Penelope"...

Getting there

Montpellier has an international airport, with flights around the world, either direct or via hubs such as London, Paris, Lyons, Brussels or Frankfurt. Marseilles's international airport is barely two hours away. A shuttle service connects the airport and the city centre.

Montpellier is also easily reached through France's network of high-speed trains, with direct trains to Barcelona (4 hours), Brussels (6 hours), Lyons (2:30 hours), Paris (3:30 hours), Charles de Gaulle airport (3:30 hours), Lille (5 hours) and convenient links to other cities such as Geneva (4 hours). The station is located in the city centre, with tram and bus connections.

Getting Around

Getting around in Montpellier without a car is easy: there is an excellent network of trams and buses – and bikes may be hired. Those who come by car may choose to park in one of the city's numerous carparks or use park-and-ride facilities.

Accommodation

Montpellier offers a wide range of accommodation: youth hostels, apartments, hotels. Prices currently start at 20€ per person (youth hostel).

More about Montpellier: <http://www.ot-montpellier.fr/en/>

A Tradition of Shakespeare Studies at Montpellier: the IRCL as organiser

The Institut de Recherche sur la Renaissance, l'âge Classique et les Lumières (IRCL) specialises in 16-18th century English and French studies. It is funded both by the University of Montpellier III and France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS, Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique). Our Institute organised an international Congress (Congrès des Lumières) involving 1200 delegates in 2007 and thus has some experience in the organisation of important international scholarly events. The Institute, which founded and publishes *Cahiers Elisabéthains* (which celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2012), has a long and prestigious tradition of Shakespeare studies, with exchanges and partnerships with a number of scholars and research teams around the world. The whole team – academics and administrative staff – would be involved in the venture.

Venue and conference costs

More details will be made available on the venues and conference registration, which will be kept as low as possible.